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U.S.-EGYPT SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY JOINT FUND ANNUAL REPORT

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Part 1: Executive Summary

At the beginning of this reporting period, NAS became the U.S. implementer for the U.S.-Egypt Science and Technology Joint Fund. The Cycle 17 RFA, featuring Junior Scientist Development Visit and Collaborative Research Grant opportunities, opened in March and closed in May 2015. After the RFA's close, both sides agreed to forward to review 113 collaborative proposals. By October 2015, the U.S. review process of the collaborative proposals was completed, through the volunteer efforts of 75 external reviewers.

Part 2: Major Milestones Completed

- In November 2014, NAS entered into a cooperative agreement with USAID-Egypt to assume the management and resume implementation of the Joint Fund, after a hiatus in U.S. activities which began in 2012.
- In March 2015, the RFA for Cycle 17 opened. The RFA included Collaborative Research Grant and Junior Scientist Development Visit opportunities.
- In May 2015, the Cycle 17 RFA closed. The RFA's online system registered 154 application accounts for collaborative proposals and 89 application accounts for junior scientist proposals. One hundred thirteen collaborative proposals were found eligible for further review.
- By October 2015, the U.S. review process of the Cycle 17 collaborative proposals was completed, primarily through six review panels held in August and September.

Part 3: Description of Key Activities

Program Activities

- In November and December 2014, planning discussions were held with the Department of State's Office of Science and Technology Cooperation (OES/STC), USAID, and the Embassy on the resumption of Joint Fund activities. In addition, NAS requested past program files from USAID, in order to have a better understanding of program history.
- January 12th – 15th, the NAS Program Officer went on a planning trip to Cairo with OES/STC. Highlights included:
 - The NAS Program Officer met with representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFA), International Cooperation (MIC), Scientific Research (MoSR), and STDF. All expressed interest in this program resuming on the U.S. side and recommended four priority research areas – agriculture, water, energy, and health – for the Cycle 17 announcement, with STDF recommending a fifth on ICT applications.
 - A half-day meeting was held with USAID staff. They provided program history, project information, and guidance on required reporting elements.
 - During a half-day meeting with STDF, it was agreed to limit the Cycle 17 RFA to two grant activities: Collaborative Research Grants and Junior Scientist Development Visits. The maximum funding ceiling for the collaborative research grant was raised from \$30,000 to \$200,000 each side (\$400,000 combined total). Tentative announcement (mid-late February) and deadline (late April) dates were discussed and STDF recommended allowing two months as adequate time to prepare proposals. NAS agreed to begin RFA revision discussions via email and Skype. STDF was amenable to using their online proposal submission platform versus having each side send proposals to two separate email accounts.
- NAS staff met with OES/STC on January 26th to discuss innovation activities through this program. Both sides agreed that further discussions would be necessary.
- Multiple Skype discussions were held in February and March with STDF to finalize the 2015 RFA language, to raise the junior scientist grant maximum to \$30,000/application, and to review technical issues with the online platform.
- The RFA announcement and closing dates were changed to March 18th and May 12th, respectively. This change was made upon receipt of the signed commitment letter by MoSR Minister Dr. Sherif Hammad, supporting resumption of the program and agreeing to priority areas.
- NAS's Joint Fund webpage (www.nationalacademies.org/egypt) was created and went live on March 18th, announcing the Cycle 17 call, with a deadline date of May 12th. The website contains general program information and alumni directory pages, which list prior grantees and project titles. When the Cycle 17 RFA was open, the NAS website included a link to the STDF application website.
- The STDF-hosted online application for Cycle 17 was closed on May 12th. NAS and STDF later agreed to temporarily re-open the call for proposals on May 18th and 19th.
- After May 19th, STDF provided NAS with administrative access to their website. This allowed for the easy download of proposal files on both sides. The application account totals were:
 - Collaborative – 154
 - Junior – 89
 - Not designated – 54
- All of the proposals were screened for eligibility and completeness. Of the collaborative proposals, one hundred thirteen were found eligible for further review. All of the undesignated proposals were found ineligible.

- NAS contacted all of the collaborative and undesignated U.S. applicants, informing them of the status of their proposals.
- From June to September, NAS contacted 235 prospective reviewers to assist in the collaborative review process. A total of 75 volunteer reviewers agreed to review proposals. The reviewers included a mix of Joint Fund alumni, with valuable expertise on capacity building in Egypt, and expert scientists who were new to the Joint Fund's work.
- In August, four panel discussions were held to review proposals. Due to the relatively small number of proposals in each of these fields, it was decided that the most efficient method to facilitate these discussions was through two-hour virtual panels.
- In September, NAS hosted two all-day panel discussions to review proposals. Reviewers were given the option of participating in-person or virtually. Ten reviewers travelled to Washington, DC to participate in-person and nine reviewers participated virtually.
- Thirty-three reviewers agreed to complete an online survey, providing input on how NAS could improve future review cycles.
- Throughout the review process, multiple Skype discussions were held with STDF to discuss the status of the reviews and possible changes in the Cycle 18 RFA.

Administration

- On February 11th, the year-one work plan and budget was submitted to USAID.
- In March, a general program email address was created at usegyptjointfund@nas.edu and has been regularly checked for inquiries.
- On August 28th, the year-two work plan and budget was submitted to USAID.

Part 4: Plans for the Next Year

- Final approval of any activities for Cycle 17 funding will occur at the next U.S.-Egypt Science and Technology Joint Board meeting. NAS will assist as necessary in the preparations for this meeting.
- The list of Cycle 17 grantees will be posted on the NAS website at the agreed upon date and all collaborative U.S. applicants will be informed of the status of their proposal. Copies of anonymous reviews will be sent when requested by applicants.
- Quarterly reports will be submitted to USAID in January, April, July, and October. After the beginning of Cycle 17 project activities, these reports will include updates on the status of funded projects.
- NAS will work with STDF to finalize the administrative details of the Cycle 18 RFA.
- The Cycle 18 RFA will be posted online, on the pre-determined opening date.